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THE BEGINNINGS OF PROTESTANT WORSHIP IN GERMANY AND SWITZERLAND.

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IT is not the purpose of the writer to propound or to defend any particular theory of worship, nor to seek to justify any particular form of worship; but only to give a brief account of the beginnings of Protestant worship, and to describe some of the forms and orders of worship which came into existence with the great Reformation of the sixteenth century. However, it may be affirmed as axiomatic that changes of view in regard to worship, both as to a theory of worship and as to its forms and methods, inevitably follow changes in doctrinal conception; that is, worship, both in theory and in form, is determined more or less by doctrine. It is on this principle that we can explain the differences in the worship of the Greek, the Roman, the Lutheran, and the Reformed churches.

It is well known that in the worship of the Roman Catholic church the chief feature is the service of the mass, and in the mass the chief part is the *canon missae*, in and by which Christ, according to Roman Catholic conception, is offered as a propitiatory sacrifice, by means of which "we obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid."¹ In connection with this doctrine of sacrifice, as preliminary and necessary to it, is the doctrine of transubstantiation, according to which the bread and wine used in the mass are, by the words of priestly consecration, changed into the veritable body and blood of Christ.

At the time of the Reformation the private masses and endowments for celebrating the same, mass priests and side altars, were multiplied almost beyond the powers of our conception in regard to such matters. The castle church at Wittenberg had 83 clerics, and endowments for 9,901 masses per year, and consumed annually 35,000 pounds of wax for candles.* There

¹ *Council of Trent*, twenty-second session, chap. ii.

* KÖSTLIN, *Friedrich der Weise*, p. 96.

were public masses, private masses, masses for the living and the dead. These masses, and the manner of celebrating them, obscured faith, and brought the *opus operatum* into the greatest prominence. The abuses were many and very great. Masses were celebrated chiefly for money. It was natural, then, that the mass, with its doctrine of sacrifice, its *opus operatum*, its work-righteousness, and its withholding of the cup from the laity, should be one of the first things to be attacked by the reformers. So early as 1518 Luther declared, in opposition to the current teaching of the church: "The sacraments of the New Law do not work the grace which they signify; faith is required prior to the sacrament."³ In a sermon on penance he declared in the same year: "All is at once given in faith, which alone makes the sacraments effect what they signify, and everything to be true which the priest says; for as thou believest, so is it done unto thee. Without faith all absolution, all the sacraments are vain; yea, they do more harm than good."

In a sermon preached in December, 1519, on "the venerable sacrament of the holy, true body of Christ," he expressed the opinion that a general council of the church ought to restore the cup to the laity, inasmuch as Christ appointed it to be used by the people. He declares further: "We use the sacrament aright when we exercise faith with it, and thereby become acceptable to God. The *opus operatum* works only injury. There must needs be the *opus operantis Dei*."⁴ This sermon, both in its teaching and tone, was so contrary to the practice of the church that it excited the anger of Duke George of Saxony, and was confiscated at Leipzig. In the year 1520 the sturdy reformer furiously attacked the papal theory of sacrifice in connection with the mass. In the *Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520) he designates the withdrawal of the cup the first tyranny, and calls transubstantiation "a figment of human opinion destitute of support from Scripture or reason. This is the second tyranny. The third tyranny is to regard the mass as a good work or sacrifice." He says further: "It is a manifest and impious error to

³ *Luther's Werke*, Jena edition, Vol. I, p. 34.

⁴ *Luther's Werke*, Erlangen edition, Vol. XXVII, pp. 25 ff.

offer or to apply the mass for sins, for satisfactions for the dead, for any necessities of ourselves or of others."

Yet during these three or four years of his reformatory activity Luther made no effort to change the practice at Wittenberg, neither by abolishing the private masses, nor by omitting the *canon*, nor by restoring the cup to the laity. He only pleaded for a general council to consider these things, and to abolish the existing abuses connected with worship. He preferred an orderly and authorized reformation. He was not disposed to make ecclesiastical changes on his own motion. He hoped that the teachers and rulers in the church would become convinced of the existence of disorders and abuses, and would order the needed changes. But at the diet of Worms, in the spring of 1521, he became convinced that no help could be expected from the Church of Rome. Yet, because of his detention at the Wartburg, he could not take the initiative in the work of practical reform. But the time had come when the old usages could no longer be tolerated in the light of the Wittenberg teaching. By the middle of the summer of 1521 the question of introducing various reforms was taken up in earnest at Wittenberg. When Luther heard what was contemplated, he wrote to Melanchthon, August 21: "I am greatly delighted that you are going to perfect the institution of Christ. This above all things is what I had intended to insist on, had I returned to you. Now we understand this tyranny, and we are strong enough to resist it, so that we may not be forced to receive only one form. I shall never again celebrate a private mass."⁵

It is thus evident that the proposed changes in the order of worship received his cordial approbation. Hence in November of the same year he wrote his celebrated treatise, *De abroganda missa privata*, and dedicated it to his "Augustinian brethren in the Wittenberg cloister." But already late in September, or early in October, the Augustinians at Wittenberg had brought on a crisis. They resolved to permit the monks to remain in the monastery or to leave it at their own option; to wear the

⁵ DE WETTE UND SEIDEMANN, *Briefe, Sendschreiben und Bedenken Luthers*, Vol. II, p. 36.

monastic dress as a matter of Christian liberty; to change the ceremonies; to abolish begging and votive masses; and to allow those to preach the Word of God who were qualified for such service, while others not thus qualified were to provide food for their brethren by the labor of their own hands.⁶

When this action of the Wittenberg monks was reported to Frederick the Wise at Lochau, he commissioned his trusty chancellor, Brück, to inquire into the matter, and to report to him. October 11 the chancellor reported (1) that "Master Gabriel Zwilling, the preacher of the Augustinians, had declared in a sermon [October 6] that the venerable sacrament of the altar should not be adored, since it was not instituted for that purpose, but only as a memorial, and to adore it is idolatry." (2) That the mass could not be celebrated in the customary way without sin. (3) That the monks should not be constrained to hold daily masses; that he and his comrades would not again celebrate the mass, but would administer the sacrament under both kinds. (4) That the theological faculty of the university and the chapter connected with the castle church did not approve these innovations.

Brück expressed the opinion that the monks, should they persist in their determination to celebrate no more masses, would soon suffer in the kitchen and in the cellar; that is, that food and wine would fail.⁷

Opposition only stimulated to action, and resolves were quickly carried into effect. From a recently discovered letter written by Albert Burer to Beatus Rhenanus, October 18, we learn that the mass ceased to be celebrated in the Wittenberg monastery October 13, 1521, and that on that day a certain monk, evidently Gabriel Zwilling, had preached in the morning two hours to the people on Christian faith, and one hour in the afternoon on the abuse of the mass, and that all who had heard him were astonished.⁸ Burer goes on to say that on October 17 a public discussion had taken place touching the abolition of the

⁶ *Corpus Reformatorum*, Vol. I, pp. 457, 458.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 459 ff.

⁸ *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 1882, p. 325.

mass. In this discussion Andreas Carlstadt had argued *pro* and *contra* for the purpose of eliciting the opinion of every person present. He recommended that the persons present, if they intended to abolish the mass, should act in conjunction with the authorities of the city. He urged a return to the institution of Christ as quickly as possible. Burer then adds: "It has not been decided what is to be done. It is certain that we will commune under both kinds, though the pope and all his nebulones should burst; that is, unless Philip [Melanchthon] has failed to tell the truth, since he said in a public lecture: 'I think we will decide to commune under both kinds.'"

October 23 Felix Ulscenius wrote from Wittenberg to Capito: "Yesterday Jonas preached in the castle church. He raged more vehemently than I have ever seen anyone do against the abuses and rites of the mass, and strives utterly to abolish them all."⁹

November 8 Jonas reports to Johann Lange, of Erfurt: "Your Augustinians here still abstain from the masses. Don't doubt, don't be alarmed at their zeal, don't be in haste to find fault."¹⁰

The excitement resulting from the action of the Augustinians, and from the various sermons and public discussions, was very great, as we learn from this letter of Jonas' to Lange. He says: "This subject of the mass is stirring up huge tragedies."

Soon the university espoused the cause of the monks, and October 20 a committee, consisting of Jonas, Carlstadt, Melanchthon, Pletner, Amsdorf, Doltz, and Schurf, memorialized the elector. They first set forth three reasons which determined the monks in their course: (1) That the mass, as currently held, was regarded as a good work, by which God is reconciled, by which something is offered to God as a sacrifice for sins. (2) That masses, as then held, are contrary to the institution of Christ and to the usage of the apostles, since they always communicated a company, and never a single individual. (3) That Christ instituted and appointed the use of both kinds. Hence the current use cannot be held with a good conscience.

They say that the abuse of the mass is one of the greatest sins on earth, and is the cause of war, of pestilence, and of the

⁹ Jonas' *Briefwechsel*, Vol. I, p. 75, note.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

blindness of reason ; that many ungodly priests celebrate it for money, while pious priests are forced to act against their consciences. They then beseech the elector, as a Christian prince, to abolish the abuses of the mass, without regard to consequences, and to restore the true use of the mass as it had been instituted by Christ, viz., that when the people come together the Word of God shall be preached, after which the bread and wine shall be consecrated by one priest and given to all who desire the communion.

This memorial gives prominence to three principles that have ever since prevailed in worship in the Lutheran church, viz.: that the preaching of the divine word is the most important part of divine worship ; that the mass is a communion which is to be administered under both kinds ; that as a communion it is to be given to all who desire it, that is, to all who long for the forgiveness of sins.

The committee concludes its memorial by saying that it does not think it would be a sin for the Augustinians to hold private masses, provided they abstain from abuses. Neither should the monks be prevented from celebrating the mass according to the gospel, that is, as a communion under both kinds.¹¹

It is evident that the elector was much impressed by this memorial from his university ; but his course was cautious and hesitating. The proposed changes involved the possibility of the most serious consequences. Churches, monasteries, and altars had been erected and endowed for the purpose of holding masses, and priests had been consecrated for the purpose of celebrating masses. In view of the proposed changes, what was to become of the endowments and of the priests ? The mass as a sacrifice for the living and for the dead was now a venerable institution in the church. Would not its abolition herald revolution and anarchy ? These and many similar questions must have seemed very weighty to the mind of the prudent elector. His heart was with the new movement, but he was not yet ready to give it the weight of his authority. Hence he commissioned Dr. Christian Baier, at that time mayor of Wittenberg, to watch

¹¹ *Corpus Reformatorum*, Vol. I, pp. 465 ff.

events closely, and to report to him by special letter. But he insists that the Augustinians shall continue to say mass as before, until a decision could be obtained from their vicar, or until matters could be more fully discussed and considered by the university.¹²

But the movement had now become too widespread and influential to be checked by the hesitation and delay of the elector. The university, the Augustinians, Jonas the provost of All Saints, Licentiate Amsdorf, and many influential citizens favored the proposed change in the mode of celebrating the mass, that is, wished to abolish the Roman Catholic mass and to restore the institution of the Lord's Supper. And now a new impulse was given to the movement when, late in October, 1521, Melanchthon published sixty-five "Propositions on the Mass."¹³ He declared *inter alia* that the mass does not justify, that is, secure the pardon of sins; that there is only one sacrifice for sins, namely, the satisfaction of Jesus Christ. The mass can only remind us of the promised grace and assure the heart of the promise of grace. Masses without the Word, that is, without preaching, are unprofitable. The Word is incomparably superior to the sign, that is, to the mass. The abuses of the mass ought to be abolished by the magistrates. He then proclaims the priesthood of all believers, and pronounces an anathema on Thomas and Scotus, the authors of the mass, and on the bishops who have not resisted the ungodly practices connected with the mass.

Excitement ran high, and was soon followed by acts of violence. Early in December a crowd of students and citizens entered the parish church before light in the morning, drove the priests from the altars, and took away the mass-books. Other acts of violence are reported, and soon matters reached a crisis, under the leadership of Carlstadt, who now determined to come forward as a practical reformer. In the castle church, of which he was archdeacon, he announced, December 22, that on New Year's day he would celebrate the communion of the Lord's Supper under both kinds, as Christ had instituted it, and would

¹² *Corpus Reformatorum*, Vol. I, pp. 470 ff.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 478-81.

abolish many of the ceremonies. This announcement was at once reported to the elector by Dr. Baier, with the recommendation that Carlstadt be forbidden to make changes in the mass, inasmuch as the university had not yet announced its decision. Anticipating interference from the elector, on Christmas day Carlstadt preached a short sermon in the castle church, in which he treated of the abuse of the mass. He then stepped to the altar, read the mass service as far as to the gospel lesson, omitting the *canon missae*, the elevation, and everything that savored of sacrifice, and administered the communion to all who wished it, using the words of institution. At the close of the service he announced that thereafter he would lay aside the usual vestments, and would omit other ceremonies. On New Year's day and on Epiphany he administered the Lord's Supper under both kinds with simple ceremonies to very large numbers of communicants.¹⁴

The decisive step had now been taken. The venerable institution of the mass, the most effective instrument of the church's power over the souls and bodies of men, had been abrogated, annulled, and set aside at Wittenberg. The doctrine that had been so ardently taught and proclaimed by Luther, Melanchthon, Zwilling, and Carlstadt had now been practically applied. It was a heroic act, and as such it deserves to be classed with the nailing up of the ninety-five theses, and the burning of the pope's bull. Had Carlstadt abstained from certain acts of fanatical extravagance and from alliance with the Zwickau prophets, he would today be universally regarded by Protestants as the reformer of worship. His ideas were correct, viz., that the Lord's Supper is a communion; that its celebration must be preceded or attended by the preaching of the divine Word; that it must be administered under both kinds; and that it must be open to those who desire it.

Nor was the work of Carlstadt, though in several respects defective and confused, without valuable results. The time had come for the change, which was approved by the theologians

¹⁴ *Real-Encyklopädie für Protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, 2. Auflage, Vol. VII, p. 526; J. KöSTLIN, *Martin Luther*, Vol. I, p. 515.

and the people. On the first day of January, 1522, Felix Ulscenius wrote to Capito: "Dr. Carlstadt has preached in the castle church, and has administered the body and blood of Christ according to the original institution and apostolic usage. The priests are very anxious about their own stomachs. We must obey God rather than a miserable man."¹⁵ On the same day Justus Jonas wrote to Capito: "On Christmas and on New Year's day a large part of the citizens communed under both kinds. I am sure that Wittenberg will be in ill repute. But the church rests on the clear Word of God, and has the example of the ancients."¹⁶ To Johann Lange he wrote January 8: "Christmas, Epiphany, and circumcision day almost all of the people here communed under both kinds. Also more than two hundred persons communed at Lochau. The same was done at Schmiedburg. We are sorry to learn that we are openly called heretics, though this may appear to the enemy as a small matter. But, however it may be, the people, fired by the writings of Dr. Martin, seemed to be on the point of seizing it themselves, had it not been given them."¹⁷

The most of the priests connected with the castle church continued to say mass in the old way, but from about the first of January, 1522, private masses ceased to be said in the parish church, and henceforth the doors of that church were closed on weekdays. A communion service took the place of the Roman Catholic mass. That the change might have the sanction of authority, Carlstadt, who was now practically at the head of affairs, drew up a social and ecclesiastical constitution, which was accepted and approved by the university and by the town council. The order for worship, the first composed according to evangelical principles, and officially ratified January 24, 1522, is as follows: The Introit; the Kyrie; the Gloria in Excelsis; the Collect; the Epistle; the Gradual; the Gospel; the Creed; the Offertory; the Preface; the Sanctus; the Communion, which closes with a collect, without the *Ite, missa est.* The *canon*

¹⁵ *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 1882, p. 330.

¹⁶ *Jonas' Briefwechsel*, Vol I, p. 82.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

missae is omitted, and the bread and wine are placed in the hands of the communicants.¹⁸

This directory, though it was not long used at Wittenberg, has permanent value, and has left an abiding impression on the Lutheran orders of worship. It fixed the custom of retaining the pure parts of the traditional service; of omitting the canon; of giving the chief place to the sermon; of consecrating the elements in the vernacular; and of giving both the bread and wine to each communicant. Luther's subsequent reforms of the service simply carried forward this first evangelical order in the direction of greater simplicity, as notably in his *Formula missae* (1523), and in his *Deutsche Messe* (1526). Of these two the former has an order almost identical with that of Carlstadt; while the latter has the following order: Hymn or Psalm; Kyrie; Gloria; Collect; Epistle; Gospel; Creed; Sermon; Paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer; Consecration and Distribution; Agnus Dei; Collect; Benediction.

There is no evidence that Luther's *Formula missae* was ever used at Wittenberg, for the church at Wittenberg had banished the Latin language from the service of worship, and had introduced the German language, on the principle that worship can be truly profitable to the worshiper only as its forms are understood, since the words of promise contained in the gospel and in the sacrament are the proper objects of faith, without which worship degenerates into a performance, an *opus operatum*.

And the example of Wittenberg was now rapidly followed in exchanging the Roman Catholic mass for the communion under both kinds, and by the use of the German language, though the word "mass" was long retained as the designation of such service. No doubt the process of change was hastened by the publication, in January, 1522, of Luther's *De abroganda missa privata*.

In this same year a German mass was introduced at Basel by Rudolph Weissenberg, at Nördlingen by Caspar Kantz, at

¹⁸ Reprinted in RICHTER, *Die Kirchenordnungen des 16. Jahrhunderts*, Vol. II, p. 484; also in *Corpus Reformatorum*, Vol. I, p. 540, in a little different order; also in SECKENDORF, *Historia Lutheranismi*, Vol. I, p. 217.

Strassburg by Pastor Zell. At Easter, in 1523, Thomas Münzer introduced the German mass at Alstädt in Thuringia. The following year his orders for matins, vespers, and the mass were published in print. In 1523 Zwingli published his *Epichiresis de canone missae*, a trenchant and energetic criticism and condemnation of the Roman Catholic mass. Fault is found chiefly with the *canon*, which is regarded as utterly contrary to the teaching of the Scriptures. He proposes the following order of service, which is remarkable for its liturgical conservatism: Introit; Kyrie; Gloria in Excelsis; Collect; Epistle; Hallelujah, with sequence; Gospel; Confession of Faith; General Prayer; Preface and Sanctus; Consecration, consisting of a prayer and the words of institution; Distribution; Prayer of Thanksgiving; Nunc Dimittis; Benediction.

But this order was not used, and not until in 1525 was the Roman Catholic mass abolished at Zürich and an evangelical service introduced. The liturgical service prepared by Zwingli, with the title "Action or Use of the Lord's Supper,"¹⁹ has the double distinction of being the first Reformed liturgy, and of being the most responsive or antiphonal service ever used in the Christian church: Prayer; Reading of 1 Cor. 11:10-20; Gloria in Excelsis, said in alternate sentences by the men and women responsively, or antiphonally; Salutation; Reading of John 6:47-64; Apostles' Creed, said antiphonally, as is the Gloria in Excelsis; Exhortation and Lord's Prayer; Another Prayer; Distribution of the Elements; Reading of Ps. 113 antiphonally by the minister, men, and women; Thanksgiving.

The communion was first celebrated according to this rite on Thursday of Passion Week, in 1525. "Indescribably great," says Jean Grob, one of Zwingli's biographers, "was the impression made by this first celebration according to the new mode. All were most deeply affected. Aged men and women, while receiving the bread and wine with thankful emotions, wept aloud. After the celebration many embraced each other as redeemed brethren. People who had long been enemies extended their hands sincerely to one another; a spirit of brotherly love, as in

¹⁹ *Deutsche Werke*, Vol. II, pp. 235 ff.

the early Christian church, could be felt everywhere. Zwingli could not thank the Lord sufficiently for the rich blessing of this first celebration of the Lord's Supper."²⁰

In Passion Week of 1524 Wolfgang Volprecht introduced a German evangelical mass—that is, a communion with the use of the German language—at Nuremberg. He was soon followed by Andreas Döber, pastor at the new spital in the same city. In the same year Bugenhagen prepared a German order for Wittenberg, and Köpphel a similar one for Strassburg. The next year a German order appeared at Erfurt, of which Johann Lange and Justus Jonas are supposed to be the authors. These several orders last named bear such a remarkable resemblance to each other and to Carlstadt's order as to suggest that they must have imitated a common model, or at least that they have their common preconception in Carlstadt's order. And yet, notwithstanding the remarkable similarity *inter se*, there were yet sufficient differences to call out the following complaint from the Strassburgers to Luther: "You celebrate the Lord's Supper in one way, the Nurembergers in another way, we in another way, and our Nördlingen neighbors in another way. Not a few persons regard this as a proof of inconsistency and uncertainty." They express the hope that uniform ceremonies will be adopted by the churches.²¹

We do not know what Luther wrote in reply to this letter. But when, a short time before this, Nicholas Hausmann, of Zwickau, requested him to prepare a German mass for the evangelicals, and suggested the calling of a council for the purpose of arranging uniform ceremonies, Luther replied: "I desire a vernacular mass, but I do not care to promise it, since I am not equal to the task, which requires music and spirituality. I permit all to do as they like until Christ shall have given something different. I do not think it safe to appoint a council from among us to arrange for uniformity of ceremonies. The history of the councils from the beginning deters me. As in the council of the apostles works and traditions were considered, rather than faith,

²⁰ *Life of Zwingli*, chap. xv.

²¹ *Luther's Werke*, Weimar edition, Vol. XIX, p. 45.

so in those of later times faith was never discussed, but always opinions and questions. Hence I mistrust and dislike the name of 'council' almost as much as the words 'free will.' If one church wishes to follow another in these external things, what need is there of compulsion by conciliar decrees, which will soon be turned into laws, and snares of souls? Let one church imitate another voluntarily, or be permitted to enjoy its customs, provided unity of spirit be preserved in faith and the word, though there be diversity and variety in the flesh and in the elements of the world."²²

The same liberal and evangelical principle had been enunciated by Luther in his *Formula missae*, prepared in November, 1523, in which he says: "We will apply our hand to making provision for the public administration; yet we will hinder no one from accepting and following another; yea, we earnestly and for Christ's sake beseech that, if anything better shall have been revealed to them, they bid us be silent, that by a common labor we may serve the common cause." And in his German mass of the year 1526 he says that he does not mean to set up a law, nor to bind the conscience of anyone with his form of worship, but he sends it forth "because everywhere the German mass and divine service are insisted on, and much complaint and scandal exist in consequence of the manifold forms of the new masses."

This principle of freedom and independence of authority in all matters of ceremony has ever prevailed in the Lutheran church. For the most part Luther's *Formula missae* and his German mass were accepted as guides and patterns in the Lutheran church, but neither of them ever had extensive use. Nearly every principality and large city in Germany constructed its own order of service, so that during the sixteenth century nearly two hundred Lutheran liturgies came into use. Unity of doctrine was emphasized and insisted on, but not uniformity of ceremonies. Indeed, Lutherans have rather prided themselves on diversity in forms of worship, and no Lutheran synod, or

²² DE WETTE, *Luther's Briefe*, Vol. II, p. 563.

conference, or consistory has ever condemned another Lutheran body nor any Lutheran congregation because of difference in the forms and ceremonies of worship. Hence it has become a law in the Lutheran church, guaranteed by the confessions themselves, that forms and orders of worship are not to be imposed, nor accepted, nor used as tests of soundness in the faith.